[857]
[854]
[291]
[142]

Fig. 87. Boy about Seven Carrying a Child, Bébai (Esseng Family), South Cameroons.

861 593 everything that is on his mind. Also, any kind of influence in the family unit is wielded only by the chief wife and /291/ even by her only to a limited extent. In all problems of life the father, as head of the family, remains the real friend and counselor of his son, as does the mother for her daughter.

861 593 574 626 In this way the love of the parents gently leads the child through the realm of youth. However, once the boy has matured into a young man, the obstinacy with which nature has to a special degree endowed the Pangwe, sometimes asserts itself even in the face /Fig. 88 appears here in the original text/ of paternal authority. In such a case, it is sometimes only the most effective and most feared means of education that helps to lead the

[Text continues on page 163]

861 593 578 626 rebellious son back to gentler modes of behavior, namely, the public curse. The curse (ebûn[o]; verb, a bûno) may be pronounced by the father or the mother upon the son, as well as by the eldest son as the father's representative, especially after the father's death, upon a younger brother. In the majority of cases, however, it is the father who pronounces the curse upon his son. The cause for such a pronouncement is continual disobedience, for instance, if the son, despite repeated warnings, takes advantage of the father's wives. The father then stands in the middle of the village square in order to be heard by the people, usually in the morning when they are all at home, or he summons them all to the meeting house and speaks to them somewhat as follows: "This person, my son, continually acts counter to my commands, etc.; therefore from this time on he shall be successful in nothing, he shall acquire no more things (through purchase and trade of gifts), he shall have no success in hunting; when he goes to a girl she shall 'look upon him as dirt' and grant him no love. For he shall be cursed." A definite formula is not prescribed in most regions; only in the north of the Pangwe region they say: "ma yŏk(e) oa" (Jaunde), that is, "I curse you." /292/

In most cases, the curse actually is followed by the consequences threatened by the father, at least insofar as they concern the son's social position. News of the curse spreads everywhere, and nobody wants to have anything more to do with the cursed one; wherever he goes he is looked at askance or even heaped with abuse and ridicule. In his father's village he will be completely unacceptable. As a result, the son is soon tired of this unbearable state of affairs and now tries to induce his father to remove the curse. He requests him through friends or relatives to remove the curse from him, or he approaches his father through his mother, but then by way of her brother, since "she is afraid of her husband."

If, in response to these requests and the son's promise that he will improve, the father is prepared to nullify the curse, the son must first of all -- if he is an adult -- pay him a goat or -- if he is not an adult -- a chicken. Contrary to the usual custom of adding every piece of livestock to the marriage portion for more wives, the animal paid as compensation by the son is consumed by

861 593 626 578 the parents and relatives. Thereafter, the son is summoned to appear in the village the next day. The father again assembles all the people in the meeting house and makes a long speech in which he rehearses the entire affair from his point of view down to the smallest details. Finally, at the conclusion of his speech, he touches upon the actual purpose of the gathering and proceeds to remove the curse. The formula with which he does so is approximately as follows:

ma	tɛ̄'i	matɛ̄'i,	ma	kǎbe	ma,
I	have imposed	curse (1) (?),	I	disengage	myself (from

[539]

1. matɛ̄'i = the imposed curse, a va matɛ̄'i = to remove the (imposed) curse; the root a tɛ̄'i = to tear oneself away from, to depart from home, otǐtɛ̄i = star (see Vol. II, pages 85 and 86).

ma	nīme	ma, --		osūe
it), I	make	straight	myself -- (into the)	water

nkīāi;	Chorus:	mān.
down.	Chorus:	Ready, past.

The texts of the formulas, which are frequently extended through the introduction of comparisons and which do not, of course, correspond word for word, are evidently all very old since they are very hard to understand and sometimes not intelligible at all.

[201] At the same time the father spits into his son's hand to indicate that what he took away from him by means of his words (symbolized by the spittle) he is putti[illegible] back in his power (hand), or the father bites off -- this is the procedure among the Jaunde -- [824] a piece of the stalk of a Costus (Zingiberaceae) and spits it out. In so doing he casts out all the bitterness from his heart (Costus stalk is bitter).

519 595 Furthermore, a curse may be pronounced by the first wife against her husband, in case he treats her badly and always neglects her in favor of others. The curse is either pronounced

561 young men to go beyond the level of simple dependence to be-
578 come, in their turn, creators of dependence, and the possibility
182 [154] of "capitalizing" human lives (women and descendants). This equilibrium has been upset and competition disorganized by the passage from warlike to economic conquest, then to an agricultural economy in which the woman plays a fundamental part, and the pacification which no longer permits the lack of women to be remedied by raids. Capitalization of women and capitalization of property are then bound together, the former becoming to a great extent the condition of the latter. The role of the "rich" man (nkumakuma) is increasing; (1) relations be-

> 1. To such an extent that Bertaut notes that among the Cameroons Boulou, who have been longer subject to a modern economy, there is only one word nkuma to designate the chief of village groupings.

tween generations, between "eldest sons" and "younger sons," may become that between possessors (women, property, and political role) and nonpossessors. Dependence tends to take on the characteristics of a domination creating tensions and conflicts.

784 626 We have been able to define a certain number of points of equilibrium in the heart of ancient Fang society. We must now specify the important position held by the system of interdicts (biki) in social control. According to M. Briault the word éki (plural, biki) comes from the root ki meaning "force, restraint, virility, power"; it expresses a ritual prohibition, an interdict or taboo; it designates "a person or thing marked with a sacred character with whom or with which contact or use are forbidden." This author considers the éki essentially from the point of view of the restraint they exercise and of the social order which they help to maintain. He writes: "They give rather the idea of an effective means of keeping youth, women ... in short, all in the society who are made to obey, in a spirit of subjection to those whose will is of importance ... political interest is doubled and made

784
626 valid by a supernatural appearance." (2) L. Mba presents them

2. M. Briault, op. cit., p. 183 ff.

as rules of conduct whose observance the Pahouin have imposed upon themselves in matters of personal behavior, of good manners and tact, or regulations concerning marriage, religion, medicine, witchcraft, and morals." (3) He refers to their extension to the

3. The "E-Tchi," unpublished study added to the reports of the Commission of Historical investigation.

whole society, their character of categorical imperative, and the power of their hold. The classification he attempts to make and that given by L. Martrou (4) suggest a distinction between

4. Father L. Martrou, "Les 'Ékis' des Mfang [The 'Ékis' of the Fang]," op. cit.

collective biki: the general ones (concerning "morality" or those of sex, age group, and "association"; and the personal biki: applying to state, or fortuitous [sic] ones. By referring to the "guardians" charged with maintaining or [155] imposing the eki – male relatives are charged with imposing them on children, the husband on the wife, the old men on the young ones – Léon Mba points out the importance of interdicts in maintaining and strengthening social pre-eminences. In the same sense, L. Martrou notes the numerous éki imposed on the wife and placing her "in an inferior position." The éki appears to be a rudimentary means of regulation expressed without specific justification, that asserts the pre-eminence of the agent in charge of maintaining it or "granting" it, and the violation of which brings about more or less keen reactions according to the nature of the authority involved (going from simple disapproval to the sacrifice of reparation). He points out particularly the form that law can assume in

784 626 a society without specialized institutions, in a society which must have recourse to material signs in default of written signs which can express any law in a permanent manner. It should be noted, as suggested by the Fang vocabulary, that the same word, biki, designates the "money" used in the past for matrimonial exchanges as well as the "interdicts." The regulation of the circulation of wives was perhaps the origin of the system of éki and was the first and most important of these regulations. There is perhaps additional proof there for the authors who consider the "taboo of incest" as a constituent element of so-called primitive societies.

If the éki system contributes to the protection of the social order and the pre-eminences it implies, it is also the creator of a right for those it subjects. The latter must respect the éki affecting them, but they insist that this obligation be respected by others. (1) In this double sense the role of "giver of éki" is

1. Thus the husband is required in an imperative manner to respect the éki of each of his wives. Information in the study Le Mariage Fang [Fang Marriage], Archives of Oyem.

important, indicating a pre-eminence and a vague form of individual right. In his study L. Martrou has given a privileged place to the éki of [personal] "circumstance" and of "social condition." The éki make conspicuous the important moments of the life of the individual (thus the multiple "interdicts" connected with pregnancy), of the collective life (periods of preparation for war or for hunting, for example), and also of special situations (the members of the "associations" have special éki for each one). There is here an important function of differentiation which marks their minds and multiplies their distinctive behavior. The n'nèm is given some éki at the same time as the évur which makes him a "sorcerer." Because of these he feels himself to be radically [156] apart to the point of linking his physical existence to the strict respect of the éki. Mr. Trezenem mentions specific cases when the involuntary transgression of a certain éki resulted

784 in almost immediate death (without any other intervention). (1)
626

1. Op. cit., pp. 70-71.

The content of the éki, which may be almost insignificant or specifically symbolic, is often less important than the fact of giving and receiving the éki. The éki has authority: that of the ancestors who have bequeathed the "tradition," (2) that of an

2. The Fangs have a word eyêm (plural, biyêm) to designate individual or collective manners of being.

ancestor who has expressed himself in a dream, that of the practicing magician, that of the father, or that of the assembly of the full-grown men, etc. It aims at an effectiveness by affirming a new circumstance of the person and of the social condition. In the case of "interdicts" that are automatically connected with certain illnesses, the objectives of differentiation and therapy are very definite.

The éki do not constitute a closed, untouchable system. They are indicative of the life itself of the total society, proliferating or falling into disuse according to circumstances. L. Mba specifies that the contact of the Fang with other people of Gabon has caused the éki to evolve "toward becoming mixed and multiple." This remark is important because it shows how the éki have been used for the policy of assimilation and power of the contacting Fang groups. It also shows how much the éki tend to adapt themselves to new conditions. In addition this "multiplicity" is allied to a great extent to the factors of differentiation operating outside the clan structure. L. Mba shows the "interdicts" not only as a "certain code of morals" but also as "the secret and atavistic resource of the Pahouin soul." He thus stresses their role in the formation of a sort of "national character" and the essential values that they may promote and defend.

575
628
783

1. Among the Beti (Eton) another rite is to be found that cuts across clan or tribal barriers: "étup is planted" to make peace, to end a family quarrel, to check an epidemic. The old men consult the spider oracle, /63/ then call the men together. The assembly is in charge of the mbongengañ (magic-makers—initiates of higher rank). The members of the two groups start to hurl mutual accusations. Then those who bring bad luck are pointed out, the biwonwolo. A shrub, meyan, is then planted, and a biañ /medicament/ is prepared in a pot, over which the audience swear an oath to give up behaving badly to one another. The biañ is then inserted into the nostrils of the biwonwolo in order to do away with the bad luck. (J. B.)

575
626

Nevertheless, certain rites had along with other aims that of setting up among the initiates an association that would produce a kind of dialectic of energies /sic/ (tyé, kié) between the group and its members. The principal society, which probably had a national character that cut across clan lines, was the ngil (1), about which unfortunately very little is known nowadays. The ngil seems to have been the main, if not the only, element of tribal cohesion on a political level. Its function was social control and defense, especially to preserve the society as a whole from the activity of sorcerers. By uniting initiates from all clans, it could settle interclan disputes by avoiding recourse to war or feud. It served to some extent as a police force and judicial system, with the initiates of lower rank carrying out the

1. The origin of this word is uncertain. It has been referred to ngil (njil) meaning gorilla; old administrative reports speak of "gorilla-men." There has also been suggested, less convincingly, a connection with ngul, meaning capacity, potency.

sentences passed by their superiors. In struggling against sorcerers, it had also a medical role, which for a while outlived its police role: Bertaut (no. 110) seems to have known it only under this aspect, which did not arouse so much administrative suspicion. Allys considers it to be the "war fetish," thus agreeing, apparently, with Allégret and Largeau. Martrou and Leroux refer in this connection to "franc-juges," which recalls Bearth's description of the nsig nto of the Bané.

Very little is known about ngil rites as a whole or about their symbolism. The initiation has some traits in common with the sô: preliminary physical and moral purification, flagellation, confession, a broth for a test made of horrible substances, representation of ancestors, symbolic transition from an epicene or androgynous to a monosexual state (2), blood sacrifices. It is probable that these traits

2. Or, on the contrary, according to Stoll, transition from a monosexual state to a bisexual completion.

are to be found in all important Pahouin rites. The sacred spot was a rectangular stockade, ésam, open to one side, with clay figures of the ngil and his "wife," (3) in front of which there was dug a

3. Or a single androgynous statue.

trench covered with a lattice in which initiates were hidden so as to prick the candidates with their spears when brought before the ngil after having had to climb through an ant pit (as in the sô). There was also a liana representing a python, the precise role /i.e., significance/ of which I do not know. The neophytes had to bring ancestral bones, which were kneaded into the clay of the figurines. The ceremony included a test intended to show if the neophyte was nnem (bearer of évu), which would have entailed his being put to death immediately; /64/ a blessing of the ritual spears which, according to Trilles, bore totemic designs; finally a sexual symbolism termed "obscene" by the authors mentioned, who give no further description of it.

The initiates left their houses in procession, masked or painted with white and red (mourning and rejoicing colors, respectively),

as strong interclan ties as does ngil; however, the initiation leader may belong to a different clan from the initiates.

Esye (étye or tyo?) is a purification and reconciliation rite, described by Father Guillemin for the Beti; it does not extend outside the ranks of an ayôm (segment).

Among the Boulou of Sangmélima, the Ntoumou of Ambam, and the Fang of Djoum, I found some medical society initiates who call themselves "snakes," using the proper word, benyo (sing. nyo), not the euphemism minkol afan (lit., bush lianas). Their specialty is treating bites and capturing and taming snakes. Initiates are known within the society under the name of one or another variety of snake, conferred at initiation. There are several degrees of initiation (three?): first-degree initiates /65/ are called bo' b'ayañ, children of the Dendraspis; advanced initiates are bo' be mvôm, children of the python. Their medical knowledge seems quite extensive; they claim, in particular, to be immune to /snake/ bites, thanks to the application of a special bian (medicament) through incisions at the time of initiation. The main center of this association would appear to be among the Mekaé of Messamena, and it is therefore not properly Pahouin.

All these ritual associations contributed to social order mainly through defense against malevolent sorcerers. The sorcerers, for their part, are often organized in secret societies in order to join forces against the organs of control and repression. Inevitably, therefore, these societies are ill understood. Nearly all of them must have included beyem (sing. nnem), that is, bearers of évu. In fact, if one may be subject to possession involuntarily and even unknown to oneself, one may also nyoñ évu, receive évu, always in the sense of a burden. A person entering a beyem association has to pay for his entrance by the sacrifice of a near relative and also accept the imposition of a special prohibition, the breaking of which (nsem) brings instant death.

The ze mimfaka (lit., road panthers), notorious under the name of leopard-men, were an association of man-eating sorcerers, a kind of counter-ngil (1). Nowadays what is involved may well be a

1. There are also independent ze mimfaka.

pathologically degenerate form of the ngil itself. In the course of a

Next, the establishment of urban and rural municipal councils permits financial decentralization. Towns under the term "urban communes," cantons, and sometimes whole subdivisions under the term "rural communes," received a legal character, with a domain to manage and a budget to fix. Elected councilors under an appointed mayor had to study plans for road works, to set up construction or maintenance programs, inquire into taxes? /taxes/ and assessments /imp^ts/, and have an eye to a sound financial position.

In towns this was nothing new, but its extension to wide rural areas was an experiment. Boulou or Beti country, where there was no risk of these new methods giving offense to a strong traditional /social/ structure, was the ideal place for trying out a new /kind of/ organization.

Throughout the elections arranged to fill the posts of councilor, we can see crystallizing the most striking traits of the new élite, the characteristics of the aristocracy or oligarchy that will get itself into power.

Pessimists had expressed fear that such elections, based on almost universal suffrage, would overthrow the classical social values and impair the prestige of the present acting élite.

This point of view disregarded the fact that in a country practically without stratification, no one can keep authority without the support of public opinion. /132/ Granting the vote to vassals in a feudal society may unsettle the power of the nobility. It is quite otherwise here, where chiefs of village or canton are most commonly chosen by election.

The older men have preserved a privileged position vis-à-vis the younger generation. A comparison of the age pyramid of councilors with that of the adult male population as a whole readily shows this: (table on following page).

The younger generation is poorly represented. Mature men of thirty to forty are represented in proportion to their ratio in the total population; but men of forty to fifty or of the older age group are heavily represented. Electoral influence has not been seized by the younger men.

Neither does it appear that the poorer class, more numerous than the rich, has benefited from the ballot so as to eliminate the latter. From the point of view of the possession of a certain amount of wealth, we can assert that municipal councilors are much better off than the common people.

779 884 This rather complicated rite includes, first, the tests I have already mentioned, which make a warrior of the young man, then initiation into the rites, and finally the consecration of weapons.

The young warrior's years of childhood and adolescence have been entirely carefree and completely outside any religious cult. He may have just been taught the name of his personal totem, and perhaps not even that. All he knows is that he is forbidden under rather severe penalties to do certain things, to eat certain kinds of food. He observes these prohibitions rigidly, because he is sure that any infringement will be immediately punished, for isolated éki are never pardoned and must always be expiated. [531]

a) Tests

779 884 626 When he has reached the age for taking his place among the warriors, a young man has first of all to undergo tests designed to show his strength and courage. Severe as they may be very few youths evade them. Besides, it would mean utter dishonor, and the young man who out of weakness or cowardice is either overcome by or doesn't dare face them, would have no choice but to exile himself. This does happen, though rarely, and especially among those few young people who have grown up from childhood as servants of the Europeans. The Fan stigmatize them by a special phrase meaning "men-women good-for-anything," and this expression tells a great deal about the special role they play and the peculiar morals of too many Europeans.

b) Initiation into rites

779 884 After he has passed these preliminary tests, a young man undergoes totemic initiation along with initiation into the ancestor cult. He is first taught the name of the family, clan and tribal totem. For this purpose, on a day chosen as favorable by the practitioner during the initiation already described above, the candidate is conducted in front of a sort of platform covered with dry leaves. First of all, the head of the family brings his évora biéri, which, as we know, encloses the ancestral skulls and the materialized totem. The neophyte will learn to distinguish the various objects and to identify the different skulls without a moment's hesitation being permitted.

8: Bennett · D-5 / (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

The skin of a bush cat is part of the *biang-akamayong* called "Nsin." 789

The Mvang.—A triangular piece of iron filled with medicine, used to keep away witches, is also part of the *biang-akamayong.* 619

Biang-akong or *biang-abal* (war medicine).—This is also part of the *biang-akamayong,* and the shots from the guns of an enemy are of no avail.

One other important fetish hangs with the *biang-akamayong.*

A piece of very hard wood. Only a certain kind of woman is selected to find this wood; she is called a special or *selected* woman on account of certain peculiarities connected with her, *e.g.*, she always fails to catch fish, she may try all day but will not succeed in catching fish. The husband of such a woman, after intercourse with her, fails to catch fish the next day, he also fails to work. This is the kind of woman always selected to find this wood; it is hard wood, she is a hard woman, and she is called *Emunega ane alert* (the woman who is hard). This medicine is also called *biang-akong,* and shot from the guns of an enemy will not harm. [777] [824]

This is the *Biang-akamayong.*

XIII.—*Witchcraft. Evus.* (*Witch.*)

If a person goes out to make witch (witch medicine, or play witch to harm others) he dies. The people take him to the backyard. Other people say, "We want to take the witch." If the corpse is a female, they open the belly. If the corpse is a male, they open the heart. They see the witch, they take it. If they bring the witch, they lay it on the smoke shelf. It dries. When finished drying they say, "We will use it as medicine." 754

This is *Evus* (witch).

Cursing dead Relations.—Written at Foulabifong, Nkomo river, April 13th, 1898. Told me by Ôvôn; fully confirmed by Ogandaga and Interpreter Roby.

E'kanesong (to curse dead relations).—This is a Fang custom. A man has a palaver with another, or goods stolen. He desires to get even with the thief. He calls a friend and curses his friend's dead relations, saying, 754 578 626

"Go and kill that person for me, or go and make him pay me goods; if you do so, I will then pay you for having cursed your dead relations." It is a serious matter to have dead relations cursed, and the friend feels very bad. He must do as bid, or he is branded as a coward, and after he has completed his task he then makes claim for payment.

Nge me bā jam dili, nge me ta minbin (If I do it, may I see the corpses [of my people]). A Fang way of swearing an oath. [539]

Ami ye mimbim mia, yinga me bat (My friend, by the corpses of your relations, kill those people for me).

Notes on *Ebômeda* (a curse).

Ilong s'ayoge (a curse that kills).

S: Bennett D-5 (ca. 1898) 1899 FH9 Fang FH9

754 *Vazege me ilong onga lóm me* (Take away the curse you have [sent] put
578 upon me).
626 *Vazege me bibomeda* (Take away the curse).
539 *Vazege me biyoge* (Take away the curse).
Bót bene mbómeda ch Anyambe edjam e mam mebē móa (People are cursed of God on account of their sins).

XIV.—*The Ngi.* (*A Fang Secret Society.*)

575 To members (*Bemvon*) the following things or *bityi* are forbidden :—
Bityi :—

1. To go and make or play at witch (make *evus*).
2. A male fowl is not to be eaten (shared) by two men of different clans.
3. Fish called *ngole* must not be partaken of with a woman.
4. Only the initiated are permitted to eat the fish called *ngone*.
5. Only the initiated may witness the Ngi dances. A woman who attempts to witness an Ngi dance will sicken and die.
6. Only the initiated must know about the bones used by Ngi.
7. A member of the Ngi society is not permitted to sleep on his back.
8. Food refuse must not be destroyed by fire.
9. To spit in the fire is against the law of Ngi (not permitted).
10. An uninitiated person will die if embraced by an Ngi.
11. To kick over rotten wood, logs, or forest stumps, is forbidden.
12. To cut a stick half through in the bush, and then bring it to town and break it, is forbidden. It must be cut through and the two pieces carried.
13. To kick the feet together after getting in bed, for the purpose of removing dust, is forbidden.

The violation of any of these mentioned *bityi* will bring misfortune and death on the *bemvon* (member).

Ngi means gorilla among the Fang; Nji means gorilla among the Bulu. The Bulu have the Nji secret society, which is reported as being precisely similar to the Fang Ngi; it came to the Bulu from the Fang.

XV.—*War.*

726 During a tribal war all adults act as warriors. There is no regular organisation of fighting men. It is a typical guerilla warfare. Parties of young men go forth at night to attack towns; others watch the forest paths to shoot men passing and [181] women going to work in the gardens. The Fang are noted for their love of war; they are the most warlike people in all West Africa. When a tribal war is on, a headman frequently goes out with a raiding party to attack the town; he carries with him the *biang-akamayong* (protecting medicine of the tribe). The usual mode of attack is as follows: Having decided to attack a town, the party of men (usually ten or